



ETHICAL VIEWS

September 2024 Vol. 139, No. 1 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us *

Sunday, September 1, 11 AM

How to Be Still When You Want to Stomp and Scream
Oliver Jane Jorgenson, Yoga Therapist



Most people view the non-profit and social-services sectors as forces for good. Yet many of these organizations also perpetuate systems of oppression. The field is shifting practices to address those failures. But while it remains in transition, social-change advocates and activists endure stress and burnout. Oliver Jane, our former Community Life Coordinator,

now pursuing a master's degree in social work at the University of Pennsylvania, discusses new research in this area and explains how they use yoga to manage their most challenging days.

Sunday, September 8, 11 AM

The State of our Nation and Ethical Culture
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader
Philadelphia Ethical Society



The national Ethical Culture community and the United States, as a whole, face challenges about where to go from here. In order to bring out our best, we must overcome limited resources, mistrust, trauma, and burnout. People of goodwill are applying their time, energy, and skills to make that happen. For his reflections, Hugh will draw on his trip to the

American Ethical Union Assembly, in Minneapolis, and his summer project about the Presidential election.

Sunday, September 15, 11 AM

What Will Ethical Culture Look Like in 25 Years?
Christian Hayden, Ethical Culture Leader



What might the Philadelphia Ethical Society and the Ethical Culture movement—in terms of service, leadership, and community—look like in the future? Christian will draw from Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower* and his own experience of—and subsequent changes to—humanist service in Ghana to lead this exercise in collective speculation.

Sunday, September 22, 11 AM

Stoicism and Peace
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

For more than a decade, Hugh has served on the core team of Peace Day Philly. This small, dedicated organization stresses the connection between inner and outer peace: a relationship also expressed in the philosophy of Stoicism. In this talk, Hugh will describe how Stoicism helps us nurture a peaceful perspective and state of being. He also will join leaders of **Philly Stoa**, a community dedicated to applying Stoicism to modern challenges, for three joint sessions to explore our shared values and practices. (See Events, Page 5.)



Sunday, September 29, 11 AM
American Ethical Union All-Society Platform

Speaker and subject to be announced. Check your *Weekly Bulletin*.

In Good We Trust

a podcast about being human
hosted by Hugh Taft-Morales



Our Ethical Podcast

Back for its second year, Hugh's podcast, *In Good We Trust*, promotes thoughtful reflection about the challenges of living an ethical life. If you haven't yet tuned in, then you can catch up [here](#) or from the Philadelphia Ethical Society [home page](#). Record

a comment on Voice Memos for inclusion in future podcasts. Share your thoughts and questions: be part of the conversation.

* Where They'll Be

In the interest of building strong relationships and sustaining community, the Philadelphia Ethical Society once again will gather in-person every Sunday, starting this month. Platforms presented in the Auditorium will be delivered simultaneously over zoom. We expect some guest speakers still will choose to appear on zoom. In those instances, members in the Auditorium can view their presentations on a screen while experiencing the rest of the program in real life. That also applies to all-AEU platforms. This is a work-in-progress; and technological obstacles remain. As the airlines remind us, "items may shift during flight." So, please continue to check your Weekly Bulletins for updates.

LETTER FROM THE LEADER

“We Are the Swing Vote!”

By *Hugh Taft-Morales*

Today, poverty is the fourth-leading cause of death in America. In a nation so blessed with material wealth, it is an ethical obscenity that for many the most basic services are often out of reach. This is why on June 29, my wife, Maureen, and I braved 94-degree temperatures to attend the Mass Poor People’s and Low-Wage Workers Assembly and Moral March on Washington D.C. and to the Polls.

The event, sponsored by the [Poor People’s Campaign](#) (PPC), drew thousands to Pennsylvania Avenue near the U. S. Capitol. While there, I managed to meet up with some Baltimore Ethical Society members. Unfortunately, I missed connecting with Philadelphia member Sylvia Metzler, who also was in attendance.

Speakers at the gathering included PPC co-chairs Bishop William Barber and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, as well as workers, labor leaders, and activists. All emphasized the basic dignity and protection every American deserves. The event was well coordinated, with hydration stations and cooling tents readily available. Signs conveying simple moral and political truths were provided for all. Mine read, “Unions Strengthen Our Democracy and Economy.” Maureen’s: “14 million Households Cannot Afford Water.”

The event’s objective was to encourage more Americans—especially the nearly 40 million struggling beneath the poverty line—to get out and vote in favor of candidates who will defend working and poor people. Rev. Barber emphasized that poor people—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—are “one of the largest untapped voting blocs” in the nation. If poor and low-wage voters, who comprise over 43 percent of the electorate, swarm to the polls, then it could be revolutionary. Rev. Barber rallied the crowd to chant repeatedly, “We are the swing vote!”

While not everyone at the rally agreed with every part of the PPC’s 17-point agenda, most attending cheered when the Campaign declared its support for, among other things, a living minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour; health care for all; affordable, adequate housing; fully protected women’s rights; and an end to hate, division, and extremist political agendas.

Rev. Barber calls this movement the “Third Reconstruction.” It’s a reminder that the battle for a more humane, compassionate, and effective government extends back more than a century. The first Reconstruction, following the Civil War, helped previously enslaved people gain economic and political footholds. The second Reconstruction was the New Deal. For five years beginning

in 1933, reforms, regulations and work projects provided relief for the unemployed, established a minimum wage, and created Social Security, among other advances.

The original Poor People’s Campaign dates back to 1968, when Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized a protest for economic justice, in Washington. It is worth noting that while the percentage of people in the United States living below the poverty line is lower today than in 1968, the numbers are comparable.

I hope that voters dedicated to economic justice turn out in unprecedented numbers for the upcoming election. If they do so, then we stand a chance our next government will better provide for the general welfare. But regardless of what happens on November 5, the poor and working citizens of this country—as well as those who support them—must continue mobilizing.

I commend all of you who already are working to increase electoral participation. Voting is the lifeblood of our ever-more-fragile democracy. We cannot take it for granted. Let’s get everyone to the polls!

Hugh Taft-Morales is the Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society



Hugh and Maureen (right) with members of the Baltimore Society

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In This Together

By Michael Black-Smith

Welcome to an exciting year!

In addition to our calendar of educational opportunities, community events, and ethical actions, we are at a rare moment in the long institutional life of the Philadelphia Ethical Society. As I hope everyone now is aware, our Leader, Hugh Taft-Morales, will be retiring in June 2025. For many of us, Hugh has been synonymous with PES. His deep knowledge, personal warmth, and justice-minded aspirations are as intrinsic to the Ethical Society as the meetinghouse at 1906 South Rittenhouse Square, which has been our home for almost a century.

That means we are at an inflection point. That could be a good thing. Sometimes, change is what organizations need. Knowing our members fairly well, however, I can say with confidence that we are not afflicted by a “Pollyanna” view of the world. This transition will be challenging, requiring deep and wide community introspection. Our ability to achieve something approaching consensus in answering profound questions will dictate how gracefully we move forward. Who and where are we now? Who and where do we want to be beyond Hugh’s tenure?

We also must be flexible and open-minded. There is no Leaders “R” Us emporium where we can buy a Hugh Taft-Morales, Model Year 2025. Nor can we request that our confederating organization, the American Ethical Union (AEU), send us a carbon-copy replacement. The nuances of Hugh’s relationship with the Society and the current state of the pipeline for new Leaders in the Ethical Culture movement preclude that. Consequently, we will likely need to be creative about filling Hugh’s leadership duties and roles.

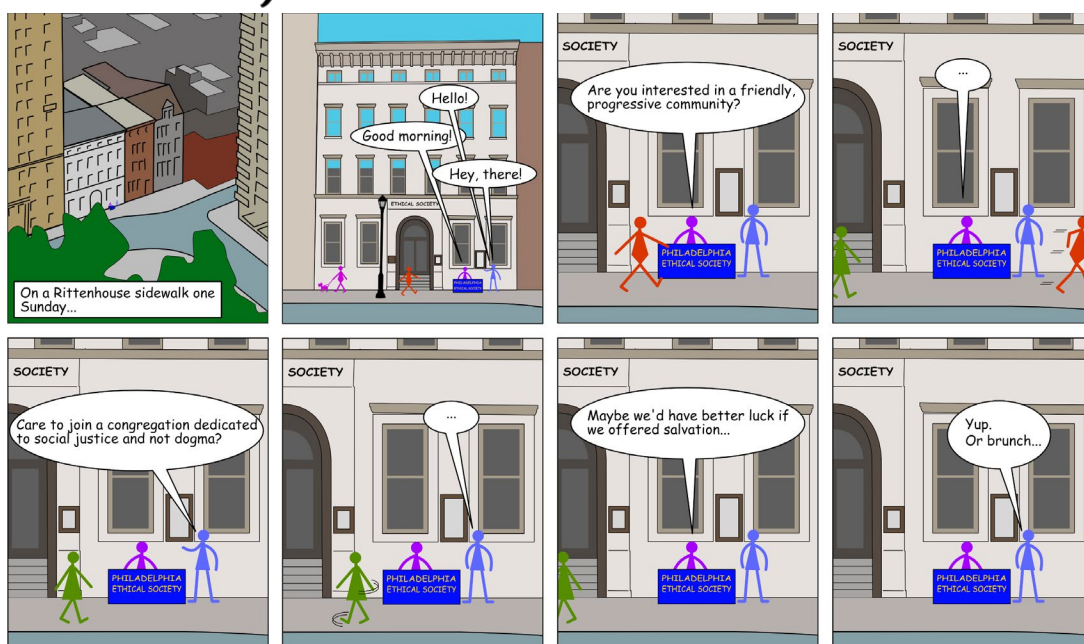
I have faith that, whatever decisions we arrive at, we will adapt and thrive. I am so confident, in fact, that I propose we include in our considerations a factor at once complicating and intriguing. As we meet in groups large and small to contemplate the future of our own Society, let us think also about our sibling Ethical Societies.

It’s not an obvious thing to do. The Ethical Culture movement is built on congregational polity. “Every tub sits on its own bottom,” as my father would say when describing the schools and departments in the university where he taught. Philadelphia is not formally accountable to Baltimore, Northern Virginia, Washington, Susquehanna Valley, or any of the other Societies in the AEU. Nor are they accountable to us. The AEU does not compel individual Societies to consider the impact of their decisions on the broader movement.

Recently, however, AEU members have been discussing the potential benefits of regionalization. We in the Philadelphia Society already know a thing or two about successfully sharing a Leader. For years, Hugh has divided his time between us and the Baltimore Ethical Society. Would additional sharing help us and other Societies in our Mid-Atlantic region make the most of our resources?

For example, could Philadelphia and Baltimore share administrative duties? Is our fellow Pennsylvania Society, in Susquehanna Valley, close enough for us to team up to offer Zoom programs? Would a regional Ethical Action Committee be too broad to address local concerns, or would its breadth maximize our impact? Would a shared team of Leaders and lay-leaders from neighboring Societies—acting virtually and in-person—be able to fulfill Hugh’s duties and roles while bringing the Societies closer together? That last possibility, by the way, is an example of how change can bring about good.

The Philly Ethicals



As we deliberate the future of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, I plan to give voice to this thought: “We are not alone. Let’s see who else is facing the same challenges. Can we help each other?”

*Michael Black-Smith
is the President of the
Philadelphia Ethical Society*

Barbecue on the Brandywine

For most of us, the annual Camp Linden Picnic comprises four or five hours of food and friendship. This year was no different. On a sunny (mercifully not sweltering) August afternoon, more than 40 people from the Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Baltimore Societies congregated at our property on the Brandywine. We ate, swam, socialized, and played lawn games, while staff conducted tours.

For some, though, festivities began the evening before, when 21 people gathered for dinner in the picnic area. On the menu: Carol Love's chili, Sharon Wallis's vegetable soup; and chicken and other dishes prepared by Jacque DuPree, from the Brooklyn Society. After dinner, Carol and Paul Lucot presented a fireworks display. Some attendees turned in (most sleeping in tents or the nature center), while others remained talking around the campfire.

Among those present were Yaiza Veliz and her daughter, Alejandra, from Venezuela; Yennifer Diaz and her son, Alejandro, from Venezuela; and Elaine Gracia and her children, Jesus and Alexa, from Peru. All are recent immigrants, still living in hotels or shelters in New York. The children are in school; the mothers are starting a worker cooperative. They accompanied Arelis Figueroa, a pastor who became connected with the Brooklyn Society through the Poor People's Campaign. On Sunday morning before the cookout, Amy Johnston engaged the children and their mothers in a lesson on pollination.

"A good time was had by all," said Sharon. "We were encouraged to invite sister Ethical Societies to our picnic and overnight in the future."

Clockwise from top right:

- Betsy Lightbourn (left) and Sharon Wallis
- Grillmeister Dan Hoffman (left) and Harry Thorn
- Nick Sanders
- Camp Linden staff with Brooklyn Society members and friends from Peru and Venezuela



UPCOMING EVENTS



Sunday, September 1, 2-3:30 PM

Introduction to Stoicism

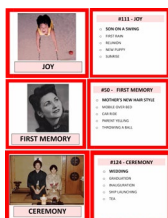
Philadelphia Stoa, a philosophical community, will discuss Stoic basics, such as accepting what is outside your control, thinking rationally, and cultivating personal excellence or virtue. This coherent system of thought can help you achieve a happy, tranquil, and meaningful life.



Sunday, September 8, 5-6:30 PM

Ethical Culture Happy Hour

Come to talk, to learn, and to raise a glass! Hugh will make a brief presentation about our humanist alternative to traditional religion: its history, values, and community. Snacks and drinks (both alcoholic and non-) will accompany the free-flowing conversation to follow. Both newcomers and members are welcome.



Tuesday, September 10, 1-2:30 PM

Peeling the Onion

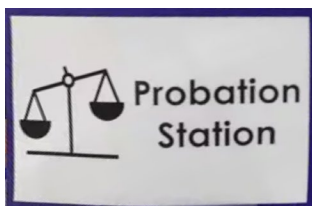
Get to know other members of the Ethical Society and our neighbors from Friends in the City through this fun activity. Participants share stories from their lives, creating opportunities for conversations and new friendships. Meet in the Leader's Office. Space is limited, so RSVP to [Hugh](#) or to [Woody Kardon](#), who is Peeling the Onion's creator.



Wednesday, September 11, 12:30-1:45 PM

Lunch with Hugh (in person)

Join Hugh in the Leader's Office to share what kept you busy over the summer. Bring your lunch.



Wednesday,

September 11, 5-8 PM

Reentry Simulation

A labyrinth of regulations, restrictions, and logistical hassles for people released from incarceration has contributed

to a national recidivism rate of around 70%. In this event, participants experience first-hand some of the incredibly difficult challenges faced by those striving to reintegrate into society. This [article](#) from the Inquirer describes the simulation in detail. Afterward, we will discuss failures of the system and ideas for reforming it with representatives from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, creators of the simulation. The event is free and open to the public. Register [here](#). Encourage your friends to come, too!



Peace Day Philly

Peace Day Philly is our city's celebration of the United Nations' International Day of Peace. A complete list of programs, including the [Philly Day of HOPE](#) and a [literacy fair](#), is available [here](#). Below are a few highlights.

Wednesday, September 18, 6-8 PM

Cultivating Peace in Philadelphia

Hugh Taft-Morales moderates this [program](#) and networking session, which explores the progress, challenges, best practices, and hopes of local individuals and organizations involved in peace-building. At the Ethical Society building.

Thursday, September 19, 6:30-8 PM (virtual)

Cultivating a Culture of Peace

The Peace Center's annual [celebration](#) marking the International Day of Peace. Register [here](#).

Saturday, September 21, 12-4 PM (virtual)

Prayers for Peace Mantra and Meditation Retreat

The [Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Center](#) presents this half-day event, which includes the chanting of traditional Buddhist mantras focused on bringing both individual peace and peace to the world. Connect by [Zoom](#).



Sunday, September 22, 2-3:30 PM

Seminar: Ethical Culture and Stoicism

The Philadelphia Ethical Society and **Philadelphia Stoa** will host a series of four seminars exploring the similarities between Stoicism and Ethical Culture. Both philosophies emphasize human dignity, rationality, and lifelong moral development. Both advocate for individual and social responsibility through universal ethical principles. By rejecting materialism, they prioritize personal and societal growth through virtuous living. Join us to discover more about these shared values and their impact on personal and community development. Additional sessions will be held October 6, November 3, and December 1, all at 2 PM. Meet at the Ethical Society building.



Wednesday, September 25, 12:30-1:45 PM

Lunch with Hugh (zoom edition)

Hugh will host a virtual lunch on [zoom](#) for members of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Ethical Societies. Come share what kept you busy over the summer. Bring your lunch.



SUNDAY SERVICES

11 am

Ethical Views is published monthly except July and August.

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PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEES

Our Society is sustained by all of its volunteers who serve on the many committees that fulfill our purpose and guide our decisions. The following generous members serve as chairs of the committees, which meet at the times shown. Members and interested others are welcome to attend. Check with chairs for meeting venues.

Email us to learn more at office@phillyethics.org.

Board of Trustees
Michael Black-Smith
Sunday, Sept 15, 6 PM

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith
no meeting this month

Camp Linden Committee
Jeffrey Dubb
Wednesday, Sept 25, 5 PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn
Wednesday, Sept 4, 5:30 PM

Ending Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Erik Younge
Saturday, Sept 14, 11 AM

Ethical Action Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

Finance Committee
Nick Sanders
Wednesday, Sept 11, 5 PM

Media Committee
Drew Snyder
Thursday, Sept 19, 6 PM

Social Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

For suggestions regarding this newsletter, contact
leighebuchanan@gmail.com.

Walking and Talking

In June, members of the Ethical Society and the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia met up for a tour of Philadelphia's Seventh Ward, a vibrant epicenter for Black life in the 19th century. Amy Hillier, the Penn professor who served as guide, shared her knowledge about such locations as Mother Bethel AME, the Institute for Colored Youth, the College Settlement House, and the site of the 1842 Lombard Street Riot.



Biking and Racing

Earlier this summer, Stan Horwitz rode his new folding e-bike into Center City to visit members Ruthann and Jeffrey Dubb at their home. Jeffrey was in the midst of physical therapy after an injury incurred while riding his own (non-electric) bicycle. By August, fortunately, Jeffrey had largely recovered, as attendees of the annual Camp Linden Picnic can attest. At that event, Jeffrey took part in informal races. Ruthann beat him.

